9-2018

Constructing the global education hub: The unlikely case of Manila

Yasmin Y. ORTIGA
Singapore Management University, yasmino@smu.edu.sg

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1448703

Published in Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, March 2018, Pages 767–781
DOI 10.1080/01596306.2018.1448703

Constructing a global education hub: the unlikely case of Manila

Yasmin Y. Ortiga

College of Alice and Peter Tan, National University of Singapore, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the creation of an unlikely education hub in Manila, Philippines, where local institutions have seen a growing number of international students from Korea, India, and the Middle East. These students seek qualifications in professions where Filipino migrants are highly represented, either to gain an advantage within their home countries or as a steppingstone towards jobs elsewhere. Drawing from current debates on 'global cities', this paper discusses how different actors promote Manila as an ideal destination for students by using the country's unique position within the global market for migrant labor and its American colonial history. Here, Filipino school owners and state officials market Philippine universities as the best venue to train for jobs found anywhere in the world. Such strategies target less privileged students unable to access more prestigious universities. creating new forms of knowledge mobility in an increasingly segmented higher education market.

KEYWORDS

Education hub; migration; labor export; international students; Philippines

The last few decades has seen the rapid emergence of 'education hubs' within Asia, with places such as Singapore and Hong Kong marketing themselves as centers for teaching and research (Collins & Ho, 2014; Currie, Vidovich, & Yang, 2008; Mok, 2007). Much has been said about how state agencies pour massive resources into higher education initiatives, building university infrastructure and recruiting foreign faculty from prestigious institutions in the West (Findlay, 2011; Lee, 2014; Sidhu, Ho, & Yeah, 2011; Yonezawa, 2007). Yet, fewer scholars have investigated the different ways the 'education hub' has been defined, and how countries attempt to construct their role in today's knowledge-based economy. Existing studies have tended to focus on common features such as university prestige, student recruitment, and the scale of government investments in higher education. In reality, the objectives and outcomes of creating these 'education hubs' vary widely from place to place. For example, Knight's (2011) typology of education hubs within Asia differentiates places that: focus only on providing higher education training (student hubs); train students with the intention of absorbing them into the local workforce (skilled workforce hubs); and work towards research and innovation (knowledge hub).

In this paper, I investigate the creation of an unlikely education hub in Manila, Philippines. I demonstrate that while Philippine universities do not possess the prestige or

CONTACT Yasmin Y. Ortiga yasmin.ortiga@nus.edu.sg

quality education that attracts students to popular destinations like Hong Kong and Singapore, these institutions have seen a growing number of international students from countries such as Korea, Nigeria, and India. These students seek qualifications in professions where Filipino migrants are highly represented, using Philippine degrees either to gain an advantage in job markets within their home countries or work towards jobs in the Middle East and North America. In this sense, Manila reflects some aspects of Knight's (2011) 'student hub', where institutions and state policies recruit foreign students to obtain higher degrees but not remain in the country. Yet, local colleges and universities also highlight Filipino graduates' success in filling specific labor needs across the world, thus reflecting the discourse surrounding skilled workforce hubs such as Bahrain, where universities are geared towards human resource development for specific industries. Drawing from current debates on the emergence of 'global cities' (see Amen, Mark, Archer, & Bosman, 2006), this paper discusses how different actors and organizations promote Manila as an ideal destination for students by using the country's unique position within the global market for migrant labor, and its American colonial history. In particular, I demonstrate how Filipino school owners, and private education companies build off the country's reputation as a top source of migrant labor, marketing Philippine universities as the best venue to train for jobs found anywhere in the world. The following sections show how such strategies construct Manila as its own version of an 'education hub', where local universities and colleges channel unexpected flows of foreign students hoping to become future migrant workers for the global economy.

Learning in the global city

Over the past few decades, scholars have sought to understand the changing role of cities in the midst of globalization. Researchers such as Sassen (2001, 2002) have noted the emergence of *global cities* – places that derive their status based on the services they provide to the global economy. Such work has tended to focus on production and manufacturing, naming cities like Tokyo, London, and New York as the key venues where capital is processed, exported, or consumed. Recent scholarship has extended the notion of the global city further, calling for the need to recognize other aspects of the global economy beyond production, and to include the many other cities located in the Global South. In particular, Surborg (2011) emphasizes the need to look at a cities' 'positionality' in the global economy, and how this shapes their interaction and response to global forces (p. 326). As noted by Shatkin (2007), cities all over the world export and process a 'diverse array of products and services, each of which has their own spatial logic' (p. 5). While cities like New York and Tokyo are central to the global market, these places connect to cities at the periphery in many ways, and these links can alter and shape urban change within both contexts.

This paper relates Manila's formation as an unlikely education hub to its current role in the global market of migrant workers, where the Philippines as a whole is widely known as one of the largest labor exporting nations in the world (Acacio, 2008; Rodriguez, 2010). While far from the traditional 'global cities' featured by scholars like Sassen, Manila serves as a crucial site where future migrant labor is recruited and trained for the work that keeps the global economy running (Tyner, 2006). Social policy analyst Yeates' (2009, 2012) terms this system as a migrant labor commodity chain, where institutions

within sending nations 'produce' workers to fill the labor needs in wealthier countries. Existing studies have shown how links between migrant sending and receiving countries shape urban change, as seen in the mushrooming of migration-related industries (such as recruitment agencies) within major cities (Guevarra, 2010; Tyner, 2009). This paper builds on this literature, discussing how Manila's position within the migrant labor commodity chain shapes its higher education market, leading state officials and school owners to market the city as an ideal destination for aspiring migrants seeking academic degrees to enhance their overseas employability.

At the same time, this paper identifies with scholars who caution against defining cities as simply the creation of structures within the global economy. The idea of the global city is itself a social construct, promoted by discourses that serve particular political and economic interests (see Amen et al., 2006). In the case of education hubs, this paper draws on studies that show how actors and organizations on the ground work to construct their cities as a desirable place for students (Raghuram, 2013). Collins and Ho (2014), for example, show how restructuring within colleges and universities can affect the flow of international students into these institutions. Understanding this process allows us to see how such changes then transform the cities where these universities are located. In this paper, I show how Manila's position in the migrant labor commodity chain offers unique challenges and opportunities to Filipino state officials and school owners, leading to distinctive changes within the city and the wider education market.

Philippine universities: educating for export

The Philippines has long been known for its state-led system of 'migration management' (Acacio, 2008, p. 104), where government bodies actively facilitate its citizens' outmigration by certifying migrants' exit papers and qualifications, ensuring their safety, and marketing their labor to potential employers.[1] While given less scholarly attention, the development of such labor-brokering strategies came with the emergence of a higher education system geared towards producing 'employable' migrant workers. Part of this phenomenon is rooted in a culture of migration in Philippine society, where young Filipinos see migration as a natural and expected part of life (Asis, 2006). While a majority of Filipino migrant workers fill low-wage jobs in construction and domestic work, a significant number are also highly represented in various skilled and semi-skilled positions, from nurses and physical therapists to marine engineers (Alburo & Abella, 2002). As such, young Filipinos also pursue higher education as a means to obtain overseas work, sparking a demand for majors associated with available jobs in popular destination countries like the US and Canada (Asis & Batistella, 2013; Ortiga, 2017).

On the other hand, private and public institutions such as government agencies, universities, and private school associations also enable these migration aspirations, facilitating students' pursuit of learning as a means to leave the country. Higher education in the Philippines is largely a private enterprise (Altbach, 1989, 2005).[2] Eighty-eight per cent of the country's 1943 colleges and universities are privately owned. Three hundred and fifty-nine of these private institutions are sectarian, while the rest are operated by corporations and family-owned businesses (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2017). As such, marketing specific majors as a stepping-stone to migration has become a lucrative strategy for school owners seeking to enhance institutional profits. In previous work, I describe how

Philippine colleges and universities attempt to emulate an ideal notion of 'flexibility', rapidly expanding academic programs associated with 'in-demand' jobs overseas, then quickly shifting school resources and manpower to other majors when these demands change (Ortiga, 2018). Such strategies lead to massive changes in both physical structures and academic curricula, as school owners rush to produce workers 'just-in-time' for anticipated labor gaps overseas. While similar practices can be seen in for-profit colleges and universities within other countries, Philippine institutions are different in that they receive structural support from a labor-brokering state. In fact, Filipino legislators have pushed for educational policies that seek to make particular graduates (e.g. nursing, seafaring) more attractive to overseas employers, and more competitive than counterparts from other migrant-sending nations (Cabanda, 2015, 2017). State agencies like the CHED have also sent representatives to potential employers in popular migrant destination countries like the UAE in order to shape local curriculum standards in line with 'first world' standards (Ortiga, 2014). In pushing for higher education as a means to migration, Philippine state officials promoted the discourse that highly educated migrants are more likely to obtain higher-paying overseas jobs and will require less protection from the state (see Rodriguez & Schwenken, 2013).

Despite such emphasis on higher education, Philippine universities have long suffered from issues of poor quality. With government agencies unable to fully regulate private institutions, students and parents have complained of unqualified faculty, poor performance in board examinations, and lack of proper facilities (Tan, 2011). While other emerging education hubs within the region have allotted state funds to academic infrastructure and moved to enhance the international reputation of local universities (Knight & Morshidi, 2011), such strategies are relatively absent in the Philippines, with only four of the country's institutions featured in world rankings, none of which are in the top 200 universities.

It is then surprising to note that despite Philippine universities' uneven performance, Filipino state officials and private school owners have reported an increasing number of international students within the country. This purported increase even prompted former Immigration Commissioner Ricardo David, Jr, to declare the Philippines as 'a new educational hub in the Asia-Pacific region' (Tubeza, 2013). However, government agencies have been inconsistent regarding the actual statistics behind this 'trend'. The Philippine CHED reports that while the number of international students has tripled in the last 10 years, foreign enrollees have remained below 10,000 (see Figure 1). The Bureau of Immigration argues that these numbers are much larger, given that CHED focuses more on new enrollees and not returning students (Aning, 2011; Tubeza, 2013). Yet, overall, both agencies have admitted that they are unable to 'count' foreign students who enroll in local universities without proper student visas, relying on extended tourist passes instead (*Cebu Daily News*, 2013). These numbers also do not include those who come to the Philippines for short-term courses (less than one year), but also attend classes in local higher education institutions.

State agencies have been in general agreement in terms of where international students originate from, with the top five nationalities comprising Koreans, Iranians, Chinese, Americans, and Indians (CHED, 2013; Miralao & Makil, 2007). The category 'Americans' is mostly composed of second generation Filipino Americans who returned to the Philippines to pursue further studies.

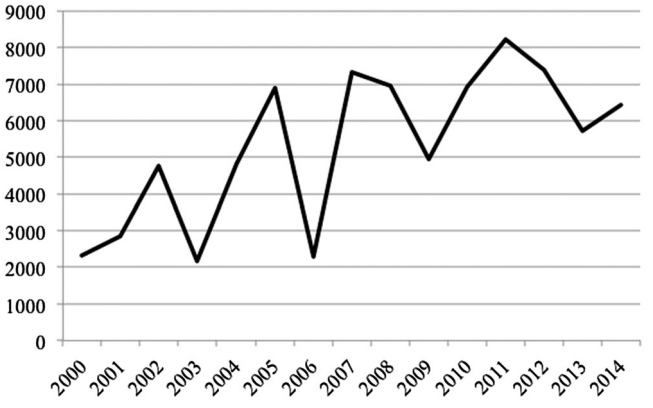

Figure 1. International student enrolment in the Philippines. Source: Philippines Commission of Higher Education (CHED).

Methods

This paper stems from a larger project on how Philippine universities attempt to educate graduates for 'export', adjusting school policies and curriculum according to the anticipated needs of foreign employers.[3] I did not begin my fieldwork with the intention of studying international students, yet it was hard to ignore the many groups of foreign students in the campuses I visited. Eventually, I began to investigate how these students came to the Philippines, and how their presence affected school structures and policies within the universities they attended. The findings in this paper are based on in-depth interviews with a total of 31 individuals: 7 state officials,[4] 4 education agents, and 20 private school owners and administrators in Manila. While this is a small sample of the many actors involved in the Philippines' international student market, these interviews provide important insight to an understudied aspect of international student mobility. I discuss how interviewees use this discourse to further their own interests, with school owners and agents hoping to widen their pool of student-customers, and state officials seek to enhance the country's reputation as a global trainer of future migrant workers.

I first recruited interviewees by circulating an invitation letter through private school associations and relevant government agencies in Manila. My first few interviewees then referred me to other school owners and state officials who would be willing to take part in my study. With the exception of the four education agents, all the interviewees were Filipino and our conversations were mostly a mix of Tagalog and English. The education agents I spoke to were all from India. They had established private offices within two universities in Manila in order to better 'serve' the foreign students on campus. I obtained interviews with them through the owners of the institutions where they were based. There are no statistics on the actual number of agencies with offices in Manila, however, as noted in my findings section, school administrators claimed that they received dozens of 'proposals to collaborate' from education agents each day. This led them to believe that there was a growing number of agents establishing ties with local universities. This paper is limited in that I spoke to only four of these agents and I did not directly interview foreign students pursuing higher degrees in Manila. As such, my findings do not provide an in-depth discussion of the work of education agents or foreign students'

motivations for pursuing higher education in the Philippines. Rather, I investigate the strategies that different actors and institutions use in marketing the Philippines as an ideal destination for a particular group of international students, and how this is shaped by Manila's position in the global market of migrant labor. Interviews ranged from 45 min to 2 h. I provide pseudonyms for all my participants in the interest of not revealing their identities or the institutions that they work for.

I complemented my interviews with an analysis of Philippine media reports on international students, university brochures (from the institutions I visited), as well as the websites of education agents promoting Philippine higher education. In particular, I looked at how local colleges and universities were marketed in these publications, and how these themes related to the themes that emerged from my interviews. I also noted whether these documents promoted specific degree programs within institutions, or catered to particular types of students. I do not consider this analysis a comprehensive view of public discourse on international students in the Philippines. However, these documents allowed me to determine whether some of the themes from my interviews reflected broader trends beyond my participants' personal perspectives.

International education at the margins

At first glance, it is difficult to imagine how Philippine universities could become an attractive option for international students. Research on student mobility highlight how international students seek foreign degrees as a means of gaining access to higher ranked institutions or better learning experiences (Alberts, 2007; Baas, 2006; Guruz, 2008; King & Raghuram, 2013; Waters, 2009). Scholars have shown how this pursuit of credentials has led to a global hierarchy of higher education institutions, not necessarily in terms of specific world rankings, but subjective perceptions of prestige and benefits (Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012). While the US and UK have traditionally been destinations, the last few decades has seen a growing diversity in student destinations, as families with fewer financial resources search for universities that can provide 'quality' degrees at cheaper rates (Findlay, 2011; Phan, 2018; Yang, 2018). These definitions of quality vary among different groups of students, but generally revolve around 'academics, facilities, learning environment and international recognition' (Dimmock & Ong, 2010, p. 31).

Most Philippine universities would fare quite poorly in terms of these standards. Aside from an uneven quality of education, a significant number of the country's universities are concentrated in Manila, a city notorious for its overpopulated residences, crippling traffic, and lack of public safety. While tuition and the cost of living are comparatively low in the Philippines, there are many other developing countries in the world that also offer cheaper alternatives to destinations like the US and Australia. Job opportunities for foreigners in the Philippine labor market are also scant, and complicated visa requirements make working in the country difficult. In line with Knight's (2011) definition of a student hub, Manila serves as a place mainly to obtain academic training, and not as a venue to explore future career opportunities.

Yet, the last few decades have seen an emerging discourse constructing Manila as a 'new' education hub which provides important opportunities for foreign students seeking overseas degrees (see Bureau of Immigration, 2014; Goquingco & Lowe, 2009).

Proponents of this discourse include Philippine state officials and school owners, as well as in the websites and advertisements of third party agents based in countries such as China, Thailand, India, and Nigeria. Branded as education 'partners' or 'consultants', these agencies actively market their chosen destinations to interested students, offering to facilitate university applications and visa requirements. These agents take care of students' housing, counseling, and everyday needs; however they are not involved in connecting students to future jobs after graduation. In recent years, Philippine universities have also accepted a steady stream of second generation Filipino-Americans, who did not qualify for or were unable to afford four-year degrees in the US. Most of these students were 'sent back' (by parents and relatives) to enter local universities, where they work towards degrees in professions where Filipinos are highly represented in the US. However, international students do not necessarily enter the country's top institutions and are scattered across a wide range of for-profit colleges and universities in Manila. State officials I interviewed for this study suggested that this is probably due to the fact that these institutions devote more resources to marketing and student recruitment, and have a built strong links with education agents.

This section discusses two ways that these different actors promoted Philippine universities as ideal destinations for international students, thereby shaping the role that city of Manila will play in today's knowledge-based economy. First, I discuss how these actors drew from the Philippines history as a former American colony in order to market Manila as an ideal place to learn English. Second, I show how foreign education agents and Filipino school owners and state officials used the Philippines' prominent status as a labor-exporting nation, depicting their academic programs as the best means to train for existing labor gaps overseas.

Commercializing the colonial: 'American' English education

Improving English language skills has long been a major reason why international students pursue higher education overseas. Current studies have shown how these motivations have sparked increased student mobility towards countries where English is a 'native' language, such as the US, UK, and Australia (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Phan, 2008). Similarly, Philippine universities have also sought to attract international students by emphasizing the opportunity to learn English in a society where the language is widely spoken. They do so by referring to the country's history as a former American colony, highlighting how English remains the medium of instruction in local schools, as well as the language used within important public and private institutions.

For example, Francis Cruz, the president of a family-owned university, said that in the university's website his school had purposely emphasized English instruction, a strategy that he credits for his institution's growing number of Chinese students. Similarly, Mr Gupta, an education agent, explained that the demand for an 'English environment' was what led him to consider the Philippines as a destination for students in 2010. Before then, he had brought Indian students to medical colleges in China, Russia, and the Ukraine. 'China is a neighboring country, and India has good relationship with Russia. We thought they were good places for our students – especially the ones who wanted to take up medicine', Mr Gupta explained. Yet, parents started to complain about the low success rates among Indian students, mainly because of difficulties in

communicating with both professors and patients. This 'backlash' encouraged Mr Gupta to look for other venues for his students. He heard about the English-based education in the Philippines and contacted the Indian embassy in Manila, which in turn, connected him to a local private university. 'I had a good meeting with the school owners and they said the students will be able to practise their English everyday', he said. The following year, Mr Gupta brought 1000 Indian students to the same university.

In many ways, Filipino school owners believed that the Philippines' colonial history set them apart from other English-speaking populations. They took pride in Filipinos' 'special' way of speaking English, which was rooted in the country's close ties to the Americans, yet 'mixed' with Filipino language and culture. In some ways, such discourse reflects Homi Bhabha's (1984) concept of *mimicry*, where individuals in colonized societies copy the dress, language, and behavior of their colonizers, often in an attempt to receive the same respect, prestige, and power accorded to such culture. Yet, Filipino school owners show how utilizing such 'colonial ties' can also lead to unexpected outcomes, where Filipino English is not merely a good 'copy' of American English, but one that can actually be more desirable. Vic Fuentes, the owner of a private college, recounted a conversation with the education attaché of the Indonesian embassy in Manila, who was interested in promoting his university's nursing program to Indonesian students:

> [The Indonesians] said, 'We like your English. It is closest to the Americans'. So I said, 'The Filipino accent is neutral [emphasis added]. They can twist that accent based on who they are talking to. You put an Indian there, no matter what you do, they will have an Indian accent.' They said, 'That is what we need. And you are very cheap as far as tuition is concerned'.

Fuentes positioned his university as a place where international students can learn the Filipino 'brand' of English proficiency – close to American English, yet 'neutral' enough that it can be understood by anyone. He was not 'selling' the ability for students to speak like Americans, but rather, like Filipinos. While countries like India were also former western colonies, he emphasizes how their accent remains distinctly Indian. The opportunity to learn 'Filipino English' is then complemented by affordable tuition fees, much lower than what students would be expected to spend in places like the US.

Beyond the wide use of English within the Philippines, education partners and school owners took the country's colonial links even further, arguing that because the Philippine higher education system was established by the Americans, it should provide a similar experience to its counterpart in the US. As stated in one education agency's website:

> Philippines follows the American system of education. This is shaped due to the fact that Philippines was a colony of USA for a period of 50 years, which shaped the education system and has brought out one of the best education system in Asia.

Such reasoning supposedly appealed to students who either do not have the financial resources to pay full tuition in the US, or do not qualify for competitive scholarships overseas. Reports on international students cite Koreans as the largest group of foreigners studying in Philippine universities, most of whom come from middle and working class backgrounds (Bureau of Immigration, 2014; Miralao & Makil, 2007). Mrs Tangco, the director of international student affairs in a private university, believed that by catering to a specific student market, Philippine universities worked 'in collaboration' with other higher ranked institutions, providing services to students who want to study in the US but are unable to do so.

While 'American style' English proficiency definitely serves as a major draw for international students in Manila, this is not the main reason why international students enter Philippine universities. In the next section, I discuss how school owners, state officials, and education agents also promote Manila as an ideal venue to train for jobs all over the world, drawing mainly from the Philippines' reputation as a migrant-sending country and the large number of Filipino workers overseas.

Educating for export

Migration scholars have noted how an increasing number of migrant-receiving nations now use academic credentials as selection criteria for aspiring immigrants, choosing desirable applicants based on the supposed knowledge and skills they bring to their host societies (De Haas, 2005; Kofman, 2007). The global governance of particular professions has also raised the need for 'certified' workers, whose training supposedly adheres to international standards and agreements (Raghuram, 2013). These demands were not lost on Filipino school owners. The Philippines' success as a labor-exporting nation served as evidence that Filipino graduates had qualifications that allowed them to work all over the world (in fact, many of these graduates are often overqualified for their current positions). A Philippine college degree then came with a promise of future mobility – not only in terms of socioeconomic status, but one's ability to move across borders in search of career opportunities. As noted in the brochure of an education agent based in Thailand and Malaysia, 'The education system is just so fantastic that Philippines has sent hundreds of doctors and engineers to work in USA, UK, Middle east, etc., along with other professionals'.

However, it is important to note that Philippine universities' supposed 'appeal' does not encompass all types of programs and professions. While famous institutions in the US or UK provide prestige to students simply by affiliation, a Philippine degree would only be valuable for programs where Filipinos have successfully established labor niches outside the country. In this sense, Philippine universities do not strive to compete in terms of STEM education, Business, or the Liberal Arts. With the exception of the country's top institutions, these programs remain largely underfunded and poorly taught within the Philippine higher education system. In a way, Manila bears more in common with Knight's (2011) definition of a skilled workforce hub, a type of education hub where both school structures and state policies are driven towards 'human resource development for the knowledge and service led economy' (p. 235). Yet, in Knight's definition, skilled workforce hubs are driven to produce human capital for local or national industries. In the case of Manila, local universities are driven towards specific industry niches that exist *outside the country*. As noted in the blog of an education agent who caters to Indian and Nepalese students:

> Philippines is generally not a good option for average students for their higher studies … However Philippines offers very good options for specific student communities – especially for English courses and Courses as Pathway to Australia and MBBS/ MD/ Medical related courses. [Emphasis added]

As such, international students in Manila have also tended to cluster in particular programs – depending on students' aspirations and future mobility plans. Indian students populate medical programs, some hoping to practise in India while others look towards possible

migration to the US. According to Mitul, an education agent for Indian medical students, students were attracted to the notion that that many Philippine universities are 'certified' by the World Health Organisation and the Medical Council of India, supposedly providing them with 'more options' as compared to entering a lower tier university in India. This emphasis on international 'accreditation' is especially apparent in Philippine nursing schools as well. Ella, an administrator at a private university's College of Nursing, also noted an influx of students Filipino Americans who needed only a Bachelor's degree to obtain better-paying jobs in the US:

> They always ask me if our school is affiliated or accredited in the States. There are a lot of universities who are not accredited so they want to make sure that when they graduate, they will get jobs in Canada or the US. Parents of these [Filipino Americans] are usually in the medical field as well. I remember one student asked me about accreditation and it was another student who answered her – he said that our university is actually one of the schools recognized in her state. I'm not sure what state that was.

Another university I visited had a large number of Nigerian students pursuing bachelor degrees in marine engineering. According to one administrator, the Nigerian government wanted to develop its shipping industry yet did not have 'good schools' to train their citizens. Noting the large number of Filipino seafarers in global shipping (see McKay, 2007), Nigerian officials 'outsourced' the training of their citizens to Philippine universities in Manila, rather than spending more resources developing local programs. Meanwhile, Korean students majored mostly in Hotel and Restaurant Management, a popular major among Filipinos who wanted jobs in the global hospitality industry. In these ways, Manila does perform much like a skilled workforce hub – one that provides such training services for multiple foreign clients.

While the number of international students in the Philippines is low compared to other popular destinations within the region, school owners and education agents have aggressively worked towards increasing their numbers. One family-owned university had increased its international student population from less than a 100 students in 2007 to more than 2000 enrollees in 2014. In his family's university, Francis was particularly excited about the impact of the recent ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) cooperative agreements among member countries, where new policies encouraged easier movement across countries in the region – particularly for professionals and students. His hope was that students from the region would turn to Philippine universities as a stepping stone to jobs in the US and Australia, places where his university has been able to establish links with employers. He claimed that his university is already receiving applications from Indonesian and Vietnamese students who want to learn English, yet they have enrolled in the Nursing program because of the potential opportunities of working in places like Japan and Canada. He explained, 'You are talking of 600 million people. Boundaries are going to collapse. There will be a lot of cross migration in the region. This is a huge opportunity for education.'

Just as Philippine labor agencies actively look for 'new markets' for Filipino migrant workers, Filipino school owners and administrators were also eager to show their flexibility, aiming to develop courses that would cater to 'new' training needs of foreign governments. Conrado De Leon, the school administrator of a large private university, shared –

> One time a group from Malaysia came to us asking if we could come up with a course on gaming. They said, 'We want dealers. We operate one of the gaming facilities in Genting … I said, 'We can assure them of the supply, but we need to know their specifications. What do they want? Then we will tailor the course to their needs. Then they have to hire all the graduates'.

Conrado's willingness to create a whole new program to cater to clients' needs shows how Philippine universities can promote themselves as places where other nations can outsource the education and training of their own citizens. As noted by another school owner, the increased movement of international students is 'one of the most lucrative markets in the world' and it was important for local universities to claim a part of this market.

True enough, many of the school owners and administrators I interviewed said that they had built relationships with specific embassies in Manila. Mrs Tangco, whose university enrolls a large number of Indian students, claimed that her relationship with the Indian embassy in Manila began as a means to guard against unscrupulous education agents and protect students. 'Some people will use the university name, collect tuition money from students, then disappear!' she said. 'It is good to have contacts at the embassy so you know who to look for when these things happen'. Yet, later, the embassy itself began referring the university to other education agents, increasing the number of companies hoping to establish partnerships with Mrs Tangco's employers. 'Now I can get about 200 proposals from agents every year!' she shared. 'Our international student population has grown a lot.'

Conclusion

Philippine universities have gone through much change in order to accommodate new inflows of international students and recruit future enrollees. Universities have built special dormitories, altered the local curricula, and hired counseling staff. New commercial businesses such as Korean groceries and Indian food stalls have also mushroomed around the university, seeking to cater to a growing clientele. Within universities, Filipino educators have adjusted to new groups of foreign students, none of whom were likely to speak *Filipino*, the national language. For many state officials and school owners, the influx of international students into local universities was a promising opportunity for Philippine higher education. Already driven towards educating Filipino college graduates for overseas jobs, Philippine colleges and universities were eager to extend their services to other nations as well. In this paper, I have discussed how education agents, school owners and educators promote Manila as its own version of a student and skilled workforce hub – drawing from the country's position as a former American colony and more importantly, a producer of migrant labor in the global economy.

Yet, there is also much that has not changed. Despite a growing influx of international students, the Philippines continues to lag behind its neighbors in terms of higher education quality and rankings. With private universities driven towards producing employable workers, academic programs with less obvious economic returns remain poorly funded and generally limited to a few public universities. As noted by Mrs Tangco, the for-profit institutions that educate the majority of international students were unconcerned with university world rankings or knowledge production. As such, academic programs that receive the most support from private school owners continue to be the

majors associated with perceived 'demands' overseas. Manila's supposed status as an 'emerging' education hub has done nothing to change this status quo.

Scholars have shown how the globalization of higher education has resulted in multiple flows of students across borders, each with their own motivations and aspirations for moving (Findlay et al., 2012). Current studies have largely focused on the movement towards wealthy cities in Asia and the West, where students seek prestigious credentials, international experience, and 'world class' universities. This paper brings to light a less obvious pattern of student mobility, where aspiring migrant workers look towards successful labor-exporting countries to provide the training to fill labor gaps at 'home' or in popular migrant destinations. This form of student migration highlights the segmented nature of international student mobility – a hidden aspect of today's knowledge-driven economy. The case of Manila shows that despite increasing scholarly interest in understanding current knowledge mobilities, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the uneven ways that people and ideas move across the globe. As noted by Collins and Ho (2014), knowledge mobilities can take on 'discrepant' forms, and these mobilities also have the power to alter local structures, reshape individual aspirations, and construct unlikely identities for 'global' cities in the margins. This paper is the beginning of an effort to understand the meaning of such phenomena, and their likely implications on immigration and cross-border connections within the region.

Notes

1. While the Philippines' migration management system emerged in the 1970s, Filipinos have been leaving to seek overseas opportunities since the Spanish colonial period. Rodriguez's (2010) book provides a more comprehensive outline of the country's migration history.
2. Isidro and Ramos (1973) provide a more detailed history of the Philippine higher education system.
3. This project included two years of fieldwork in Manila, where I interviewed educators and students from two programs associated with overseas jobs: Nursing and Hotel and Restaurant Management. Findings from this project have been reported in other publications (see Ortiga, 2018).
4. State officials came from the following departments: The Philippine Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, and the Department of Education.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

Acacio, K. (2008). Managing labor migration: Philippine state policy and international migration flows, 1969–2000. *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal*, *17*(2), 103–132.

Alberts, H. C. (2007). Beyond the headlines: Changing patterns in international student enrolment in the United States. *Geojournal*, *68*(2–3), 141–153.

Alburo, F. A., & Abella, D. I. (2002). *Skilled labour migration from developing countries: Study on the Philippines*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Altbach, P. G. (1989). Twisted roots: The Western impact on Asian higher education. *Higher Education*, *18*(1), 9–29.

Altbach, P. G. (2005). Universities: Family style. In P. G. Altbach & D. C. Levy (Eds.), *Private higher education: A global revolution* (pp. 29–32). The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
Amen, M., Mark, K. A., Archer, K., & Bosman, M. M. (2006). Thinking through global cities. In M. M. Amen, K. Archer, & M. M. Bosman (Eds.), *Relocating global cities: From the center to the margins* (pp. 1–22). Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
Aning, J. (2011, August 21). Philippines has 26k foreign students. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved from http://globalnation.inquirer.net/9781/philippines-has-26k-foreign-students
Asis, M. M. B. (2006). The Philippines' culture of migration. Retrieved from http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=364
Asis, M. M. B., & Batistella, G. (2013). *The Filippino youth and the employment migration nexus*. Makati City: UNICEF Philippines.
Baas, M. (2006). Students of migration: Indian international students and the question of permanent residency. *People and Place*, *14*(1), 9–24.
Bhabha, H. (1984). Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. *October*, *28*, 125–133. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/778467
Bureau of Immigration (Philippines). (2014). *Koreans dominate foreign student admissions at Philippine universities*. Manila: Bureau of Immigration.
Cabanda, E. (2015). Identifying the role of the sending state in the emigration of health professionals: A review of the empirical literature. *Migration and Development*. doi:10.1080/21632324.2015.1123838
Cabanda, E. (2017). Higher education, migration and policy design of the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002. *Higher Education Policy*. doi:10.1057/s41307-017-0038-8
Cebu Daily News. (2013, October 1). BI reminds schools: Admit only foreign students with study visa. Retrieved from http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/498651/bi-reminds-schools-admit-only-foreign-students-with-study-visa
Chowdhury, R., & Phan, L. H. (2014). *Desiring TESOL and international education: Market abuse and exploitation*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
Collins, F. L., & Ho, K. C. (2014). Globalising higher education and cities in Asia and the pacific. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *55*(2), 127–131.
Commission on Higher Education, Philippines (CHED). (2013). Foreign students. Retrieved from http://www.ched.gov.ph/index.php/higher-education-in-numbers/foreign-students/
Commission on Higher Education, Philippines (CHED). (2017). Distribution of higher education institutions by institution type, AY 2016–2017. Retrieved from http://www.ched.gov.ph/central/page/distribution-of-higher-education-institutions-by-institution-type-ay-2016-17
Currie, J., Vidovich, L., & Yang, R. (2008). Countability not answerability? Accountability in Hong Kong and Singapore Universities. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *28*(1), 67–85.
De Haas, H. (2005). International migration, remittances and development: Myths and facts. *Third World Quarterly*, *26*(8), 1269–1284.
Dimmock, C., & Ong, J. S. L. (2010). Studying overseas: Mainland Chinese students in Singapore. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *40*(1), 25–42.
Findlay, A. (2011). An assessment of supply and demand-side theorizations of international student mobility. *International Migration*, *49*(2), 162–190.
Findlay, A., King, R., Smith, F., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *37*(1), 118–131.
Goquingco, J., & Lowe, S. (2009). Not just exporting: Philippines becoming an attractive destination for international students. *World Education News & Reviews*. Retrieved from http://wenr.wes.org/2009/01/wenr-january-2009-not-just-exporting-philippines-becoming-an-attractive-destination-for-international-students/
Guevarra, A. R. (2010). *Marketing dreams, manufacturing heroes: The transnational labor brokering of Filipino workers*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Guruz, K. (2008). *Higher education and international student mobility in the global knowledge economy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Isidro, A., & Ramos, M. D. (1973). *Private colleges and universities in the Philippines*. Manila: Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations.
King, R., & Raghuram, P. (2013). International student migration: Mapping the field and new research agendas. *Population, Space and Place*, *19*(2), 127–137.
Knight, J. (2011). Education hubs: A fad, a brand, an innovation? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *15*(3), 221–240.
Knight, J., & Morshidi, S. (2011). The complexities and challenges of regional education hubs: Focus on Malaysia. *Higher Education*, *62*(5), 593–606.
Kofman, E. (2007). The knowledge economy, gender and stratified migrations. *Studies in Social Justice*, *1*(2), 122–135.
Lee, J. T. (2014). Education hubs and talent development: Policymaking and implementation challenges. *Higher Education*, *68*(6), 807–823.
McKay, S. C. (2007). Filipino sea men: Constructing masculinities in an ethnic labour niche. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *33*(4), 617–633.
Miralao, V. A., & Makil, L. P. (2007). Understanding the Korean diaspora to the Philippines. In V. A. Miralao & L. P. Makil (Eds.), *Exploring transnational communities in the Philippines* (pp. 24–39). Philippines: Philippine Social Science Council.
Mok, K. H. (2007). Questing for internationalization of universities in Asia: Critical reflections. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *11*(3–4), 433–454.
Ortiga, Y. Y. (2014). Professional problems: The burden of producing the 'global' Filipino nurse. *Social Science & Medicine*, *115*, 64–71.
Ortiga, Y. Y. (2017). The flexible university: Higher education and the global production of migrant labor. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *38*(4), 485–499.
Ortiga, Y. Y. (2018). *Emigration, employability, and higher education in the Philippines*. Oxford: Routledge.
Phan, L. H. (2008). *Teaching English as an international language: Identity, resistance and negotiation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
Phan, L. H. (2018). Higher education, English and the idea of 'the West': Globalizing and encountering a global south regional university. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. doi:10.1080/01596306.2018.1448704
Raghuram, P. (2013). Theorising the spaces of student migration. *Population, Space and Place*, *19*(2), 138–154.
Rodriguez, R. M. (2010). *Migrants for export: How the Philippine state brokers labor to the world*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Rodriguez, R. M., & Schwenken, H. (2013). Becoming a migrant at home: Subjectivation processes in migrant-sending countries prior to departure. *Population, Space and Place*, *19*(2), 375–388.
Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Sassen, S. (2002). Global cities and survival circuits. In B. Ehrenreich & A. R. Hochschild (Eds.), *Global woman: Nannies, maids and sex workers in the new economy* (pp. 254–274). New York: Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt and Company.
Shatkin, G. (2007). Global cities of the south: Emerging perspectives on growth and inequality. *Cities*, *24*(1), 1–15.
Sidhu, R., Ho, K. C., & Yeah, B. S. A. (2011). Emerging education hubs: The case of Singapore. *Higher Education*, *61*(1), 23–40.
Surborg, B. (2011). World cities are just 'basing points for capital': Interacting with the world city from the global south. *Urban Forum*, *22*(4), 315–330.
Tan, E. (2011). What's wrong with Philippine higher education? *Philippine Review of Economics*, *48*(1), 147–184.
Tubeza, P. C. (2013, January 18). Number of foreign students up 14% to 47,000–BI. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved from http://globalnation.inquirer.net/61819/number-of-foreign-students-up-14-to-47000-bi
Tyner, J. A. (2006). Laboring in the periphery: The place of Manila in the global economy. In M. M. Amen, K. Archer, & M. M. Bosman (Eds.), *Relocating global cities: From the center to the margins* (pp. 101–117). Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Tyner, J. A. (2009). *The Philippines: Mobilities, identities and globalization*. New York: Routledge.
Waters, J. L. (2009). Transnational geographies of academic distinction: The role of social capital in the recognition and evaluation of 'overseas' credentials. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *7*(2), 113–129.
Yang, P. (2018). Compromise and Complicity in International Student Mobility: The ethnographic case of Indian medical students at a Chinese University. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. doi:10.1080/01596306.2018.1435600
Yeates, N. (2009). Production for export: The role of the state in the development and operation of global care chains. *Population, Space and Place*, *15*(2), 175–187.
Yeates, N. (2012). Global care chains: A state-of-the-art review and future directions in care transnationalization research. *Global Networks*, *12*(2), 135–154.
Yonezawa, A. (2007). Strategies for the emerging global higher education market in East Asia: A comparative study of Singapore, Malaysia and Japan. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *5*(1), 125–136.